THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) No, Sir.

(b) Question does not arise.

Smuggling of Palm oil

1063. SHRI C. PERUMAL: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that a huge quantity of palm oil have been smuggled into our country;

(b) if so, whether Government have initiated any preventive measure to curb such huge illegal inflow of palm oil into the country;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) if not. the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) to (d) Several cases of smuggling of palm oil including crude palm oil (industrial grade) and RBD palm oil have been booked by the customs field formations. All field formations have been alerted to prevent and thwart the illegal inflow of palm oil into the country.

Exorbitant hike in cement price

†1064. SHRI PYARELAL KHANDELWAL: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the fact that cement manufacturing companies of the country are increasing the prices of cement exorbitantly by forming a cartel;

(b) whether it is also a fact that Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practices Commission (MRTPC) has issued a notice also to some companies in this regard;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) whether Government are considering to administer the prices of cement in view of the attitudes of the cement companies?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRIAL POLICY AND PROMOTION, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI ASHWANI KUMAR): (a) As per Cement Manufacturers' Association, the average price of cement has increased from Rs. 158 per bag in December, 2005 to Rs. 229 per bag in July, 2007. The details of month-wise prices are given in the statement–I laid on the Table of the House. (*See* below).

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(b) and (c) The details of cases pending with Monopolies and Restrictive Trade Practices Commission (MRTPC) against the Cement Industry are given in the statement-II (*See* below) laid on the Table of the House.

(d) No Sir.

Statement-I

Details of Month-wise Prices of Cement Bags

Year	Month	Average Price in Rs. per bag	Increase in Price since Dec., 2005	Percentage increase in price since Dec., 2005
2005	December	158		
2006	January	163	5	3.2%
	February	175	17	10.8%
	March	189	31	19.6%
	April	199	41	25.9%
	March	200	42	26.6%
	June	201	43	27.2%
	July	201	43	27.2%
	August	201	43	27.2%
	September	202	44	27.8%
	October	205	47	29.7%
	November	208	50	31.6%
	December	209	51	32.3%
2007	January	209	51	32.3%
	February	212	54	34.2%
	March	225	67	42.4%
	April	226	68	43.0%
	May	226	68	43.0%
	June	227	69	43.7%
	July	229	71	44.9%

Statement-II

Details of the Petitions pending with the MRTP Commission are as under:-

Sl. No.	Case No.	Parties - Details	Status
1	2	3	4
1.	RTPE 99/1990	DG, MRTPC *Vs.* Cement Manufacturers' Association DG, MRTPC have filed an application against CMA and 44 other manufacturers in 1990. The allegation is that the respondents increased the prices at short intervals without corresponding increase in cost of production. It was also alleged that there was little variation in the prices of several cement manufacturers in the same region in spite of the fact that the cost of production was not identical.	Final arguments since 23.7.07.
2.	MTPE 2/1992	DG, MRTPC *Vs.* Associated Cement Co. Ltd., Mumbai The DG, MRTPC filed an application against ACC Ltd, Mumbai in 1992 alleging that ACC had increased the prices from time to time without any corresponding increase in the cost of production leading to unreasonable increase in profits.	Listed for final arguments on 7.9.07.
3.	RTPE 83/2000	DG, MRTPC & M/s. Gayatri Agencies Kanchipuram *Vs.* Cement Manufacturers' Association, Chennai This pertains to a complaint filed by M/s. Gayatri Agency against Cement Manufacturers' Association, Chennai alleging that the CMA did not give free hand to the informant in the matter of prices, sale and distribution of cement by imposing various restrictions.	Listed for cross examination on 29.11.07.
4.	RTPE 21/2001	Sh. Servejit S. Mokha & Another *Vs.* Cement Manufacturers' Association & Others This is a complaint filed by Shri S.S. Mokha and Another against CMA and 10 others alleging that the said cement manufacturers had formed cartel and increased the prices.	Listed for final arguments on 3.9.07.

1	2	3	4
5.	RTPE 32/2006	DG, MRTPC *Vs.* Gujarat Ambuja Cement Ltd. & Two Others The DG, MRTPC filed an application against Gujarat Ambuja Cement Ltd, ACC Ltd. and Grasim India Ltd in July, 2006 alleging that the said companies have acted in concert and created artificial scarcity of supplies and rise in prices in the market. It was alleged that it amounts to manipulate the supplies of cement in the market leading to rise in price.	Listed on 21.8.07 for framing of issues
6.	UTPE 86/2006	DG, MRTPC *Vs.* Various Cement Manufacturers This case pertains to alleged cartelization by cement manufacturers and the MRTPC *prima facie* found that the allegations made in the newspapers amounted to manipulation of prices. As such the Commission directed the DG to investigate the media report and submit preliminary investigation report. The report was filed by DG and the matter is now listed.	Listed on 25.10.07 for framing of issues.
7.	RTPE 52/2006	The Builders Association of India *Vs.* Cement Manufacturers' Association This is a reference from the Rajya Sabha Secretariat forwarding a reference from Builders' Association of India alleging increased prices without any corresponding increase in excise duty, lime stone, royalty, sales tax, railway freight, etc. The Commission referred this representation to the DG for investigation.	Under preliminary investigation.
8.	RTPE 1/2007	DG, MRTPC *Vs.* Associated Cement Companies Ltd. This case pertains to M/s. ACC Ltd and was received by MRTP Commission in 2006. The facts of the case are that the agreement entered into by the ACC Ltd. and M/s. Bulk Cement Corporation (India) Ltd, *prima-facie* contained certain restrictive trade practices as defined under Section 33 of the MRTP Act. It was also stated that the MRP fixed was very high and it is above the cost of production of cement. The report concluded that higher MRP attracted the provisions of Standards of Weight and Measures (Packed Commodities)	The report of DG (I&R) is awaited.

1	2	3	4
		Rules and Consumer Protection Act. The MRTP Commission have referred this matter to the DG for investigation.	
9.	RTPE 4/2007	Jaimeen Steel Corporation *Vs.* Gujarat Ambuja Cement Ltd. This is a complaint filed by a dealer, Jaimeen Steel Corporation against Gujarat Ambuja Cements Ltd. The complaint was registered in the Commission on 22.1.07 and it was referred to the DG(I&R) for investigation. The grievance of the complainant is regarding the goods supplied by the company and the payments made by the dealer. It was alleged, without referring to any section of the MRTP Act, 1969, that the company is resorting to discriminatory and restrictive trade practices. The complaint does not pertain to cartelization by cement companies. The DG has filed the Preliminary Investigation Report (PIR). The PIR was considered by the Commission and the matter is listed for 31.8.07 for further directions.	Matter listed for 31.8.07 for further directions.

According priority to Agri Export Zones

1065. SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Agri Export Zones (AEZs) numbering 60 and spread over 20 States have so far garnered an investment of Rs. 866 crore and achieved export of Rs. 5,413 crores over the last five years against an envisaged investment of Rs. 1718 crore and export of Rs. 11,822 crore;

(b) if so, whether any measures are being taken to accord priority so as to attract investment into this area and particularly in the State of Andhra Pradesh;

(c) if so, the details thereof; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE, MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI JAIRAM RAMESH): (a) 60 Agri Export Zones (AEZs) have crystallized an investment of Rs. 866.40 crore and exports of Rs. 5649.14 crore over the last five years against an envisaged investment of Rs. 1717.95 crore and export of Rs. 11821.47.

(b) and (c) Yes, Sir. Efforts are on to revitalize select AEZs through funding under the "Assistance to States for Developing Export Infrastructure and Allied Activities" (ASIDE) Scheme. 16 projects, envisaging an investment of about Rs. 48.85 crore in